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GENERAL NOTES.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.¹

GENERAL.—In a recent number of the *Mittheilungen* of the Geographical Society of Vienna, Dr. Penck takes issue with the usually accepted proportions of land and water (1 to 2.76), asserting that the unknown regions around the poles are too extensive to permit of any reasonable approach to accuracy in this respect.

M. Rambaud gives the extent and population of the French colonies, or rather possessions. Including Tonkin and Madagascar, these comprise about 1,800,000 square kilometers, and about twenty-four and a half millions of people. In this total the population of the French Congo possessions is not included, and Tonkin is credited with only 12,000,000 of inhabitants. The commerce with these colonies was, in 1883, about 915,000,000 of francs.

Major Feilden, naturalist of the Arctic expedition of 1875-76, has given in his adhesion to the belief that through the secular cooling of our planet the poles became first fitted for the reception of life; that in Palæozoic times the north pole possessed a climate at least as warm as that now experienced at the equator, and that during the Miocene period the temperature, though gradually cooling, supported a flora which spread southwards.

AMERICA.—*The Xingu*.—Petermann's *Mittheilungen* (Nos. 5 and 6) contains a full account, with maps, of the German Xingu expedition of 1884. The Xingu is formed by the union of three large rivers: the Kuliseii, the Ronuro and the Batovy, the last of which falls into the Ronuro a little above its confluence with the Kaliseii, which may be considered the main stream. The expedition descended the Batovy, which flows in numerous bends through a flat country, but is intersected by many rocky strata forming rapids. After the confluence the Xingu flows through a level country till it reaches 10° S. lat. Here it enters granite hills and forms the Martius cataract. From 10° to 3° the Xingu receives only two important affluents, both from the left. At 3° 40' begins the great bend of the Xingu, the cataracts upon which were explored by Prince Adalbert of Prussia in 1842-'43. Within this bend the river falls 260 feet. At its confluence with the Amazons the Xingu is a mighty stream nearly five miles wide. The different branches of the Xingu are inhabited by no less than eighteen different Indian tribes, though the total population does not exceed 2,000. The Suyá Indians live in beehive-shaped houses with a diameter of thirty-three feet.

American News.—Lake Tahoe is dethroned from its position as the deepest lake upon the continent, Captain Dutton having found a depth of 1996 feet in Crater lake, Oregon. The average depth is about 1490 feet. The shores of this lake are very

¹ This department is edited by W. N. LOCKINGTON, Philadelphia.

precipitous, and the same rapid descent continues below the water, so that depths of fifteen to eighteen hundred feet are found all around the margin. It had been previously sounded by Capt. G. M. Wheeler, U. S. Engineers.—M. Charnay has, during his last season of exploration in Yucatan, discovered the remains of a town called Ek Balam, or the city of the black tiger. Also, upon an island about eight leagues north of Campeachy, he found a Maya burial ground which had never before been visited by a man of science.

AFRICA.—*Mozambique*.—The Portuguese are aiding to fill up some of the gaps upon the map of Africa. An expedition to the gold mines of Marica, worked at a time of which no records have reached us, has resulted not only in the formation of a new town, Villa Gouveia, but in the exploration of the lower course of the Aruangua or Pungue, which proves to be navigable for a considerable distance, as are also the Revue and Buzi, the conjoined streams of which enter the ocean slightly to the south of the Pungue. There appears to be a channel connecting the Pungue with the Inhandué, the tributary of the Zambezi upon which the new town is situated. Lake Sungue, which varies much in size according to the season, discharges by the Urema into the Pungue, while the Mucua connects it with the Zangue or lower course of the Inhandué.

A tolerably full description of the Comoro islands is contained in the *Revue Scientifique* (August 7). The religion is Mohammedan, and the people a mixture of Arabs and Caffres, with Madagascans, etc. The largest island, Great Comoro or Angazia, has a superficies of 1100 kilometers. Moheli is the smallest but most fertile of the group; Anjouan has the best harbor and is most frequented by Europeans, and Mayotte, or Mahore, the most southern and western of the archipelago, belongs to France.

Petermann's *Mittheilungen* (July) contains an account of the German expedition of 1884-'85 to Angra Pequena, or Luderitzland. The immediate neighborhood of the settlement is described as a dreary spot where there is scarcely any living thing but snakes and lizards. A short distance to the north are extensive dunes reaching a height of 500 meters. The interior does not appear to be much better. River beds are dry even in winter. Snakes, scorpions and beetles seem to have been the most noticeable objects. Aus and Gubub, east of 16° E. long. and about 26° 40' S. lat., are the highest points of this part of Africa, the level falling to the south towards Orange river. The scenery here consists entirely of barren table-mountain, between which and the ocean extends a broad sandy plateau. Further to the south a grassy region was found. Dr. Pohle reports an entirely negative result; the want of rain-fall and lack of drinking water unfit the district for colonization; minerals are few, and vegetation is so scarce that man and beast could scarcely be kept alive.

It has been proven that workable deposits of petroleum exist

on the Egyptian shore of the Red sea. The material, which has lost its more volatile components, is found at the level of the sea upon piercing the recent coral formation of the foreshore. Col. Ardagh believes that the source of the petroleum is in the older limestone beneath the coral.

M. Aubry, during his visit to Shoa in 1883-'84, surveyed the source of the Hawash and its course for about 190 miles, and also surveyed the Mugueur, a tributary of the Blue Nile.

EUROPE.—*Surveys in the Pyrenees*.—Recent surveys in the Pyrenees, by M. Schrader, aided by the explorations of Dr. Jaubernat, have proved the existence of a lake, the largest on the northern slope of the Pyrenees, in a gap between two chains of peaks, which, approached from opposite sides, had previously been supposed to be identical. M. Schrader states that on the south and south-east of the Aran valley are several ranges, nearly 10,000 feet high, that are unnoted on any geographical map. The Aran valley is tributary to the Garonne.

ASIA.—*Burmah*.—The August issue of the Proceedings of the Burmah Geographical Society contains an interesting account of Burmah, the country and people, by Mr. J. A. Bryce. The topography of the region, the physical and other characteristics of the races which inhabit it, the productions and climate, and the present status of the various nationalities, are discussed. Mr. Bryce fears that the Burman, in spite of that vigor which has enabled him to continue dominant for two thousand years, will succumb to the more energetic Shans and Kakhyens (Singphos), now that his empire has been put an end to by the British. The Burmese occupy the upper part of the Irawadi delta, the upper valley of the Sittang, a narrow space on each side of the Irawadi in Upper Burmah, and the Moo valley, between the Irawadi and the Kyendwin. The Talaings still form the bulk of the population in the delta of the Irawadi and Sittang. The Talaings are smaller, plumper, fairer and less hard-featured than the Burmese, while the Shans are bigger and stouter than the dominant race. Mr. Bryce puts the total population at seven and a half millions, about half of them Burmese.

The Drying up of Siberian Lakes.—The rapid drying up of the lakes of the Aral-Caspian region is not limited to the two great lakes which give their names to it. M. Yadrintseff, in the *Izvestia* of the St. Petersburg Geographical Society, gives two maps, one representing a group of Siberian lakes, according to a survey made in 1784, the other giving the same lakes as they appeared in 1813, 1820, 1850, 1860, and finally in 1880. The group consisted of three large lakes, Tchany (the largest), Sumy, and Abyshkan, and the small lake Moloki, between Abyshkan and Tchany. The latter lake has greatly dwindled since 1784. Lake Moloki has diminished from twenty

miles in length to three; and Lake Abyshkan, in the early part of the century forty miles from north to south and seventeen from east to west, is reduced to three small ponds, the largest scarcely a mile and a half wide. Another lake, Tchebakly, which in 1784 was forty miles by thirty, is also now reduced to three ponds, the largest less than two miles across.

Among the results of the New Zealand earthquake are the addition of 300 feet to the height of Mount Tarawera, and the subsidence of the beautiful Lake Rotomahana, which is transformed into an expanse of seething mud. Its renowned terraces are reported to be destroyed. Large areas are covered with volcanic dust and mud. Lake Rotomahana was the wonderland of the volcanic belt of the North island, as it was surrounded with terraces of silica from which issued hot springs and geysers.

The Transcaspian railway was, on the 14th day of July, opened for traffic as far as Merv. The entire length of the line to Samarcand will be 1335 versts, or 890 miles. Three hundred versts of this is in Bokharan territory. Between Michailovsk, on the Caspian, and Samarcand, there are in all sixty-three stations, several of which have to be supplied with water by pipe-lines or water-trains, while others are provided with artesian wells.

Mr. H. O. Forbes has returned to New South Wales. He was unable to ascend the Owen Stanley range, but reached a point sixty-five miles from Port Moresby.

GEOLOGY AND PALÆONTOLOGY.

A REMARKABLE EXTINCT GEYSER BASIN IN S. W. COLORADO.¹—In many features the Yellowstone National Park region is closely paralleled by several other districts. In its geography, and to a large degree in its geognosy, it does not materially differ from a portion of the country adjacent to the elevated "pinnacle," which parts the waters of the Rio Grande, the Arkansas and the Colorado. As early as 1879, my own familiarity with the former area led me to the detection of traces in Southern Colorado of the same action which has marked the later stages of volcanic decadence in the park. Afterwards, from month to month, evidences of this nature multiplied from further researches, until in 1882 it was safe to announce that a considerable portion of the San Juan mining region is covered by the deposits from ancient thermal springs.² At this time the peculiar *bonanzas* of the Red Mountain district began to receive attention, and the predictions of the writer, based upon the foregoing conclusions, were invariably verified in the exploitation of the mines. But the development of the ore-bodies and much more detailed examination of

¹ Read before Section E., A. A. A. S., Buffalo Meeting, 1886.

² Notes on the geology and mineralogy of San Juan county, Colorado, by Theo. B. Comstock. Published in Trans. American Institute of Mining Engineers, Vol. XI, pp. 165-191 (*with map*).